

**Acts 20:17-36** A Shepherd's heart exposed in leaving a Christ exalting legacy.

## INTRO

Do you recall back in (Acts 15) where Ben helpfully drew out from the text a distinct difference between Paul and Barnabas. Two men of God, who loved God and were used by Him mightily, but had differences in their make up...in their temperament as God fashioned them to be so. Paul, himself being one who 'thought' best not to take John called Mark with he and Barnabas to "visit the brothers in every city where they proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are." While Barnabas on the other hand, wanted 'desired' to take MARK with them. Paul 'thought'..Barnabas 'wanted' desired.... Neither one sinning while having clear differences in their working out of this decision concerning Mark. One more geared toward the head while the other toward the heart. This disagreement became so sharp that they separated from one another...not a break of fellowship...but went different directions in ministry which God used to multiply His work through them.

Now, does this mean that Paul was all head and no heart...cold and rigid calloused to the bone... and likewise Barnabas all heart and no head...kinda gushie like.. emotionally enamored with every heart twinge? Certainly not. BOTH were competent in sound doctrine...they knew and taught the scriptures well...and both had a heart for the LOST. They loved people and loved bringing the gospel message to people whom they loved seeing God save and loved encouraging them in this new life they've been given. Two men..Distinct in their individual make up. Different men, who may approach things differently with equal godly intent, BOTH children of God in heart and mind.

This is affirmed in our passage of consideration this morning where we are given a very...a very special portion of scripture. "All scripture is God breathed" ..from Genesis to Revelation and is to be treasured as the "fountain of Life" that it is....Some particular passages, however, are very special in their content. And the portion we are given this morning to partake of,...would be one of them. PAUL, in these verses (17-38 of chpt 20) is simply pouring his heart out to these elders he's gathered together. Leading men amongst the body of believers in Ephesus whom he has spent the better part of 3 years investing his whole self into. We have provided in the passage his farewell address to those who would continue shepherding the church in Ephesus. Knowing that he (Paul),....would not see them again in this life...his heart is poured out to them that he might leave to them a Christ exalting legacy. That they would share

his heart in continuing the Christlike care of the church he has both instructed and exemplified for them. And **he does so in a manner** where his heart is beautifully exposed to them that they may share his **Christlike heart** in **shepherding's Christ's church.** A Shepherd's heart exposed in leaving a Christ exalting legacy - This is what we have been gifted with this morning.

The **Message itself has clear attention given to elders, pastors, overseers** of a **body of believers**, YET, every **nugget of truth** contained in it **is of great benefit** to the whole church who are **equally justified redeemed sinners** looking to **God** and His **word** to **grow in grace** by which our **lives, all of our lives...mine, yours, OURS...each and every one of us** to **increasingly exemplify God's work in us** for ALL to see.

**Paul**, speaking to the church in (1 **Corinthians 11:1**) **instructs** them to follow him as he **follows** Christ. "**Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.**"..is what he says. We are all on the same ultimate destination - **to be more like Christ, to grow in holiness.** "**Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.**" We are to be (**Hebrews 10:24-25; 2 Peter 3:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:6**) examples to one another in godliness. Examples are helpful. **One of the chief helps in aiding in our children's math work is the examples provided.** *Boy are those helpful.* Instructions are given of the concept to learn...**clear and complete**...but the **examples** are key **for us to grasp the concept.** How much more in how it pertains to godliness.

And **recognizing** it's **importance**...this is where Paul begins his farewell address to these **Ephesian elders.** **Bringing** to their **attention** the **example** he has **steadfastly** been in **investing** his whole self in this grace of service to God in shepherding Christ's church. It's **also** how he **ends** his **address** to them. Paul **Book ends** his word spoken to them **with the example he has been for them.** WHY? The **importance** of a shepherd's words **aligning** with their **conduct** in life. **Truly Truly**...these must line up....**otherwise, ones words hold no weight of influence for any good.** So the **first point** of a Shepherd's **heart** exposed in leaving a **Christ exalting legacy** is that **Shepherds are Spiritual Examples.**

BODY

1) **FIRST POINT - Shepherds are Spiritual Examples** - *opening example* Paul **opens** his farewell address with focused attention on his example to them of **Steadfastness, Service** and **Speech** seen in verses (17-21). - read

Paul, in this space in time, if you recall from last couple weeks...is moving quickly towards Jerusalem for he has on him a pressing urgency be their. One verse prior (verse 16) notes that he is *hastening* to get their. That's why he didn't go up to Ephesus but rather called them down to him as he is on a fast pace route to Jerusalem. Time saver. And we'll spend more time on this urgency he feels shortly. BUT FIRST... Paul calls the elders of the church in Ephesus to come to him that he may speak with them one last time. A Shepherd's heart is exposed and he begins by identifying the importance of Shepherd's being Spiritual examples.

And in this opening example he places attention on Steadfastness, Service and Speech. x2

**Steadfastness** - "You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia.." Stead-fastness...Paul was a perpetual example from the very moment he set foot in that region among them. One of my favorite passages...is in (Psalm 25) "All the paths of the Lord are Steadfastness and Faithfulness". All the paths... I'm helped by it continually... Peter notes Steadfastness as one of the qualities to add to your faith. Make every effort Peter says "...make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self control, an self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection and brotherly affection with love. (2 Peter 5-8). PAUL exemplified this to these men he's invested his whole self into...who is passing on to them..if you will...this Christ exalting legacy of shepherding the CHURCH. Paul draws attention to this necessary quality whom they knew Paul as a shepherd exhibited from the moment his foot touched Asian soil. "You yourselves know" Paul says...Paul is confident in this for he was known by them AS his heart expresses here and his LIFE was one Steadfast in Serving the "Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews..."

Paul exposes his servant's heart that he wants them to share and likewise exemplify. All humility...not for the praise of man, not for selfish gain, not to promote himself in any way. He was humble, and those whom he provided shepherding oversight of and did life with,..KNEW this of him who also saw him...weep. PAUL shed tears with these men who likely shed tears along with him. Godly leaders - weep...Jesus wept. That's not a weakness...it's a Christlike strength. Not conjured up falsely but sincere expressions of their hearts. Man - May God touch us men's hearts that we would BOTH weep over that which breaks His heart or equally bring joy to God's heart. Tears of Joy are just as GOD glorifying.

Paul **exposing his heart here** is **not afraid** to **place emphases** on the **fact** that he **shed tears**. NOR is he **hesitant** to **note the struggles...**the **trials** he underwent **“through the plots of the Jews.”** These **difficulties** were **very real** but **ineffective** in halting his **Steadfastness of Service and Speech**.

Paul **did not withdraw** or **hesitate** out of **fear of consequences...** he **“didn’t shrink back from declaring anything that was profitable”** BOTH in **public** and **private** (from house to house) and to **all people** (both Jew and Greek). ALL the **struggles** and **trials** did not **deter Paul** in remaining **steadfast** in **service** and **speech**. **And what was Paul’s summary gospel message?** **“repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.”** **Repentance toward** God....and of **Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ**. The **gospel message summarized**.

**Repentance** is this: It’s to **recognize** you are a **sinner**. You **Come** to the **great awareness** that **you are not certain** of **whether** you are **going** to **Heaven** or **Hell**. A sense of **impending** doom is upon you by **which** you have **NO rest**. No rest whatsoever....And in this **dreadful state** you (**repent**) you **have** a **change of heart and mind**..you **turn to** seek God **earnestly to be rescued from this state...** **acknowledging your guilt** before **Him who is Holy** and **Just**, **confessing it...**and **pleading for mercy and forgiveness to be extended...****YOU** **orient your life towards Him...****turning away** from **following** the **course of this world** (**Ephesians 2:2**) and **YOU** **place your faith in Christ alone** who...**through faith in Him** as your **LORD and SAVIOR**,..you **may have...**only **through faith in Christ** may you **have...Praise God...may you have** the **assurance** of **pardon for your sin** and the **hope of eternal life** whereby **your soul ‘can’ BE at rest** and at **peace with God** and have **abiding peace** by **abiding in Christ by faith** **all** the days of your **life**.

Paul **begins** by **emphasizing the Spiritual example** he’s been for these elders in **Steadfastness**, in **Service** and in **Speech**. **Exposing his heart** in the **importance** for them to **grasp this as their own** that **their words would carry weight** with **them**. **As it should for all followers of Christ**.

Gathering their attention **this way** he then **exposes his heart further** in **sharing that which** GOD has **placed upon His heart**. **In doing this** he BOTH **informs** and **demonstrates**, how **Shepherds...are to be Spiritually Led**. Our **second point** this morning.....

## 2) SECOND POINT - **Shepherds are Spiritually Led**

This **second point** is expressed by the weight of words Paul uses and the **absolute surrender** to the conviction given to him, **by** The Spirit of God. Paul says in (22-24) - read

Paul was spirit led with vision for ministry, purpose in every day and every moment given, deep conviction to that which God the Holy Spirit placed upon his heart and he was tenacious in his obedience to it. A manner of christian living all believers ought to aspire to....not only elders.

PAUL, pouring his heart out to these elders from Ephesus that they would share his heart,....makes clear of what God has.... 'CALLED' him to,..... the 'COST' of it and his 'contemplations' regarding it. As God's appointed servant, PAUL was led by an internal necessity, bound to obey that which God is telling him to do...bound as if he is a prisoner...there is NO alternative option in consideration for Paul who "did not account his life of any value nor as precious to himself" but only to finish that which God has called him to all the way to the end of his life where he notes joyfully in his letter to Timothy nearing his departure from this life that he himself as 'already being a poured out drink offering' on behalf of the saints of God. (2 Timothy 4:6)...

THIS IS A SHEPHERD'S HEART. The essence of Paul's heart exposed here is further captured in the letter he wrote to these Ephesians while 'in' that which the Holy Spirit testified to him would take place....imprisonment! In prison, Paul thinking of these very elders and the church they Shepherd,...writes to them,....not for correction as so many of his letters were to other churches... BUT loving admonishment and encouragement to build them up and let them know how he was doing,...he was concerned over their concern for him. (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:21-22)... He pens this heavenly letter 'Ephesians' where he describes himself as "a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles" asking them for prayer for him that he would proclaim boldly the mysteries of the gospel for which he says that he is an ambassador in chains, that he may declare boldly as he ought to speak." (Ephesians 6:19-20) - PAUL, a Spirit led Shepherd of Christ's church...as all shepherd's of Christ's Church ought to be, he (Paul), even while in prison and in chains, is compelled by The Holy Spirit to provide spiritual nourishment to the church of which..he obeys. Which leads to our 3rd point this morning being given in this special passage here containing a shepherds heart exposed as seen in Paul.

3) THIRD POINT - Shepherds provide Spiritual nourishment

Paul instructed Timothy in (2 Timothy 2:1-2) “..to be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus, and what you **have heard from me** in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will **be able to teach** others also.”

Paul provided **Spiritual nourishment** to Timothy and instructs him to continue the pattern. **Train up other faithful men. Entrust** to them that which has been passed on to you...that they will be able to teach others also.

This is **Paul's method** of **developing church leadership**. (Philippians 4:9) “What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me - practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you” and **invest yourself into other faithful men who will ‘do’ likewise**. And Paul provides the extent to which this is **to be done...As** he informs them in (verse 25) that he “knows that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again.” This is the last time we’ll speak **face to face in this life** in other words... “Therefore” he says. (verse 26) “I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God.”

Paul's conscience is clear. He has **poured his life** and **soul into these men** providing spiritual nourishment from the whole counsel of God's word which was **exemplified in his life** for **them to see**.

And this also is the **vision** shared by the **leadership** here at Pillar Bible Fellowship. Our **heart's desire** is for other **faithful men** to be called and equipped to **serve in this grace along side the leadership here at Pillar Elders and Deacons**. **Brother's**, it's never too early to let that desire be made known. If you **sense** at all God **stirring** within you...aspirations to serve Him in this way...we warmly invite that conversation to begin. That is a **good** desire... a **godly** desire to have that we want to **promote** here as a church..... So please,...let it be known.

Paul, at this point, **stays true** to **nourishing** them with the whole counsel of God by **providing a stern sobering warning**. It is of **upmost importance**.. **he says**..for Shepherds to be Spiritually Alert. **Our Fourth point**.

#### 4) FOURTH POINT - **Shepherds are Spiritually Alert**

As we read these **4 verses** together (28-31) see **what grabs your gut** as to the weight of this portion of scripture (these **4 verses**) from which all else stems from in this 4th point being made of **Shepherds being Spiritually Alert**. - read

Where did you feel your GUT get grabbed of that which bears the weight of this point? The [Importance of Shepherd's being Spiritually Alert.](#)

For me,...it is the **flock**. It's the **flock** of God..His heritage. The greatest weight for me is the worth of the church in which a Shepherd provides oversight for. Everything else stems from that. The Holy Spirit calls, equips and appoints ELDERS to shepherd, to care for that which is **unable to be measured in worth**....The blood bought church of God. CHRIST laid down his life for the sheep. He purchased the flock of God... "ransomed the church from her futile ways inherited from our forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot." (1 Peter 1:18-19). Christ was slaughtered! on the Cross to redeem undeserving sinners "from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works." The CHURCH!.. Who purpose everyday to fulfill every good work in Christ Jesus that God has prepared for them (Ephesians 2)...NOT to earn his favor,..NO..but rather... rather in response to the immeasurable grace they have received through faith in Christ "as they wait for their blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Because of this....be Spiritually Alert...pay careful attention to yourselves and ALL the flock...for we have an enemy...and he is ever so SLY....a wolf in sheeps clothing...a fierce predator cloaked in deceptive piousness. John Piper makes note of the enemy's tactic in this way. "Let us not be deceived by outward appearances. Satan, "disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 1:14)...He keeps his deadliest diseases most sanitary. He clothes his captains in religious garments and houses his weapons in temples."

Be ON ALERT. They will come in among us and assimilate for a time,...but only to ravage the flock;...and they will also rise up from among leadership "speaking twisted things to draw the disciples away after them." False teachers are a very real threat to the health and safety of the CHURCH. Careful attention is to be persistently given to oneself and to every member of the body. Paul's heart is exposed here over this concern which is further expounded upon in his letter's to (Timothy). Paul joins other inspired authors of scripture in this 'warning' of false teachers and therefore the great necessity of being watchful, alert with careful attention on oneself first and then upon your brothers and sisters in Christ that "no one (not one of us) would be led astray by diverse and strange teachings." (Hebrews 13:9).

And as was the pattern....Paul's words were supported by his conduct...he recalls for them the example he has been in providing this careful care for

them with **persistent passion** and **zeal**.. Night and Day with (*here it is again*) with tears...with **tears**... **Passionately**, with **all his heart** he **was watchful** and **alert** in **lovingly**...**Admonishing** everyone,..*which covers a spectrum*..**admonishing covers a spectrum** of **warning firmly**, **giving caution**, **providing godly advise/ counsel**, **encouragement**...**admonishing** - BY - **encouragement**, **giving exhortation**, and **also rebuke or reprove** if **need be**.

IN SHORT, whatever would serve to **build up the life of Christ in them** and **protect** them from **falling prey** to **false teachers**. PAUL, *providing an example in himself*, **admonishes** these **elders** to be **Spiritually Alert as Shepherds** who **provide the oversight** of God's **blood** bought **church**.

To which Paul then now, **directs their attention** towards **something FAR GREATER** than **his example** to **place their anchor** in. If this **Christ exalting Legacy** is to **continue** on....**Paul points** them to the **only way** in which it **will**. PAUL **exposes his heart as one who is absolutely Dependent upon God and His word** for **all things that they likewise** would **share along with him** where they **place their ultimate TRUST**. Our 5th point. -

5) FIFTH POINT - **Shepherds are Spiritually Dependent upon God and His word**. **They Trust God** and **His word**- Though Paul is an example for them to follow *which is helpful*, He **ultimately points them / directs them in (verse 32)** to **God and His Word**... - *read*

**You will not see my face anymore** says Paul...but **I am only a servant** of the living God. **Look to Him**, **Trust Him** and **His word for everything** for He alone and His word alone is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified by the same very God and the same very word of His grace.

**Cherish God** and **His word**, **Depend upon God** and **His word as your very pulse of life**. **Never forget the grace of God**...that shepherds are Spiritually Dependent upon God and the word of His grace **which alone will equip** you, and **alone will strengthen** you, **sustain** you, **keep** you, **protect** you, **instruct** you, **correct** you, and **nourish** you **each and every day** until that day when you receive your inheritance that awaits in Christ among those who are likewise sanctified by God and the word of His grace. Every **born again** child of God **saved** by **grace**.

Approaching the end of his farewell address **by ultimately entrusting** these **Ephesians elders** to God and to the word of His grace. PAUL,..*demonstrating*

*once again* where His trust lies... closes his farewell address with the other book end example that he has been for them. Do you recall that first point?

6) FINAL POINT (2nd part) - **Shepherds are Spiritual Examples** -

Well, this is Part 2 -Paul closes with a few more spiritual examples he has been for them

In his opening example to them...remember?...his **focus** was on Steadfastness, **Service** and **Speech**...and now, in his **closing** remarks he places focus on **Contentment**, **Constancy** and **Charity**. Pick up with me at verses (33-35)

PAUL steadfastly embodied these virtues of **Contentment**, **Constancy** and **Charity** by **joyfully embracing** a simple quiet life, being easily satisfied and not being a lover of money,...though he '*diligently*' worked hard...he worked hard..that was his '*constant*' habit...but not to have surplus for himself... *rather though*, to provide sufficiently for his needs...those who were with him **and** to have plenty left over to experience his Lord's promise that "It is more blessed to give than to receive." **We all seek a blessed life, do we not? We all do....JESUS provides the means to attain it. Charity.**

Reflect the generosity God has shown you in Christ by being generous with others....and in doing so , in doing so...you will experience the truth of our Lord's promise. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." PAUL **pointedly makes clear** to these **Ephesian elders** the **blessedness of this**,....and the **importance** for them to model it to the church who also should embody it. **Contentment, Constancy and Charity** - Christian living.

Something happens here now that is **nothing other than remarkable** as we close this morning.

CONCLUSION

(verses 36-38) provides a glimpse into a depicted scene in the life of a shepherd of God's people. Paul's **final moments** with **these elders**. - read

Nothing short of deep affection seen for one another. **Real men** who **love** and serve Jesus together in life **are real men** who **weep** together; **are real men** who **embrace** one another; are **real men** who **share clear expressive** signs of affectionate care for one another from the **bonds** formed in years of ministry

together.....Does not every genuine, God fearing, Bible believing, Christ loving church member long for such a bond to be formed amongst a family of believers?

A **resounding** 'YES!' is what I hear. How then? How do we attain this; and abide there? What have we learned from Paul this morning who has exposed his heart to these elders that he would leave a Christ exalting legacy in shepherding God's church? That which not only elders would receive and share as their own but likewise every member of the body of Christ. What have we learned that 'we' - as a church - would both experience and leave a Christ exalting legacy of Shepherding God's people?

The importance of being godly examples to one another..The book ends of Paul's farewell address; Steadfastness, Service, Speech, Contentment, Constancy and Charity.

To be Spiritually led in life; To provide Spiritual nourishment from God's word for those under your oversight; To be Spiritually Alert, vigilant with careful watch on oneself and then your fellow christians against false teaching; and To be absolutely and utterly dependent upon God and the word of His grace for everything.

Is this not what we promote here in the life of Pillar Bible Fellowship? Our church covenant document is the most recent reflection of that I believe. All the framework is set to aid in bringing about only what the Spirit of God can do. So how does a body take what is promoted by our lips to that which BOTH permeates and propagates the atmosphere in this household of faith?

I believe the answer lies in the example Paul provides to these elders. Paul lived 'courageous' christianity. His life was one of full disclosure. Paul's shepherd heart is exposed with no hold back. Paul's story is well known. He was a broken sinful man who the Spirit of Christ redeemed. His brokenness was not hidden and his love for the church was fully exposed from his heart which was felt and experienced by the church. Furthermore...furthermore he was known as one "who was gentle among the church, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children." (1 Thessalonians 2:7) - As tough as Paul was...he was also very tender like his Savior - JESUS. The church felt safe around him...FELT FREE to come to him with anything...any concern, any question or trouble they had. No barriers.

To both **live** and **leave** a Christ exalting **legacy** of caring for God's church...May we as church, and the elders appointed by God **to lead** and lovingly provide it's caring oversight, be **compelled** by the exposure of this Christlike **shepherd's heart** as seen in the life and ministry of Paul...**be likewise ourselves**, as we invest in the lives of one another toward the ministry of this local church family to the praise and advancement of the '**everlasting legacy**' ....the **Kingdom of God** where **Christ Jesus rules and reigns** as our **risen King** in which **Righteousness dwells** in heaven,..and on earth forevermore. (2 Peter 3:13)

## COMMUNION

There is no safer table to dine at and expose your heart...to pour out freely all that afflicts within you than that of our **Lord's table**. He already knows the sin you are grieving over and about to confess. He knows the struggles you have, the concerns, the hurts...**he knows it all** and he says 'It's safe child.' **Come as you are** and **know you are forgiven**. **Know** that **you are loved** and that **in me there is healing**. **Christ Jesus** invites the **believer here this morning** to **come forward**, *when your heart is prepared*, and **partake** of the **elements** of **communion**. Take of the cup representing the new covenant in his blood and the bread broken; symbolic of his body that was crushed for our iniquities. The **body of Christ** and **his blood shed** as **atonement** for our **sins** that we may have the assurance of forgiveness and the hope of eternal life. The **table is prepared**...come and **declare the Lord's death** until he returns.

**Benediction - Revelation 2:1-5.** Admonishment to you and to myself to not lose your 1st love

# Family

## Table Talk



February 3, 2019



## GOD'S TRUTH

**A Christ exalting legacy is worth investing your whole heart into!**



### Family Discussion ?s

1. Does your family have an heirloom passed down from one generation to another? Maybe it's a great grandmother's wedding ring or an old vehicle that has been in the family for years. Whatever it is, consider the effort and attentiveness given to its care and safe keeping that it may be shared by generations in your family to come.
2. Do you know that the Bible describes Christians who make up Christ's church as living stones? The precious gems God is making us to be is of incomparable worth for its value is tied to who acquired it and what it cost him.
3. In light of this grace received, how might we work with God in investing our whole hearts into its (the church's) care and safe keeping till Jesus returns to take us home with him once and for all?
4. The following passages for consideration provide some ways we may put forth effort and attentive care in this endeavor we share together in.
5. The legacy of exalting Christ is everlasting. Join with your brothers and sisters in Christ to serve him by investing your whole heart in one another's lives to the glory of His name.

### Key Verse

**"Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."**

**2 Timothy 2:10 (ESV)**

### TABLE READING

Lead your kids further into God's Word...

2. 1 Peter 2:5; Colossians 1:15-20; Mark 10:45
3. Deuteronomy 11:16-25; Psalm 78:1-8; Matthew 28:19; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-8; 4:9-12; 5:12-22; 2 Timothy 2:1-16; Philippians 2:1-5



### Scripture Memory: Acts 20:32

**"And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." - Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (ESV)**